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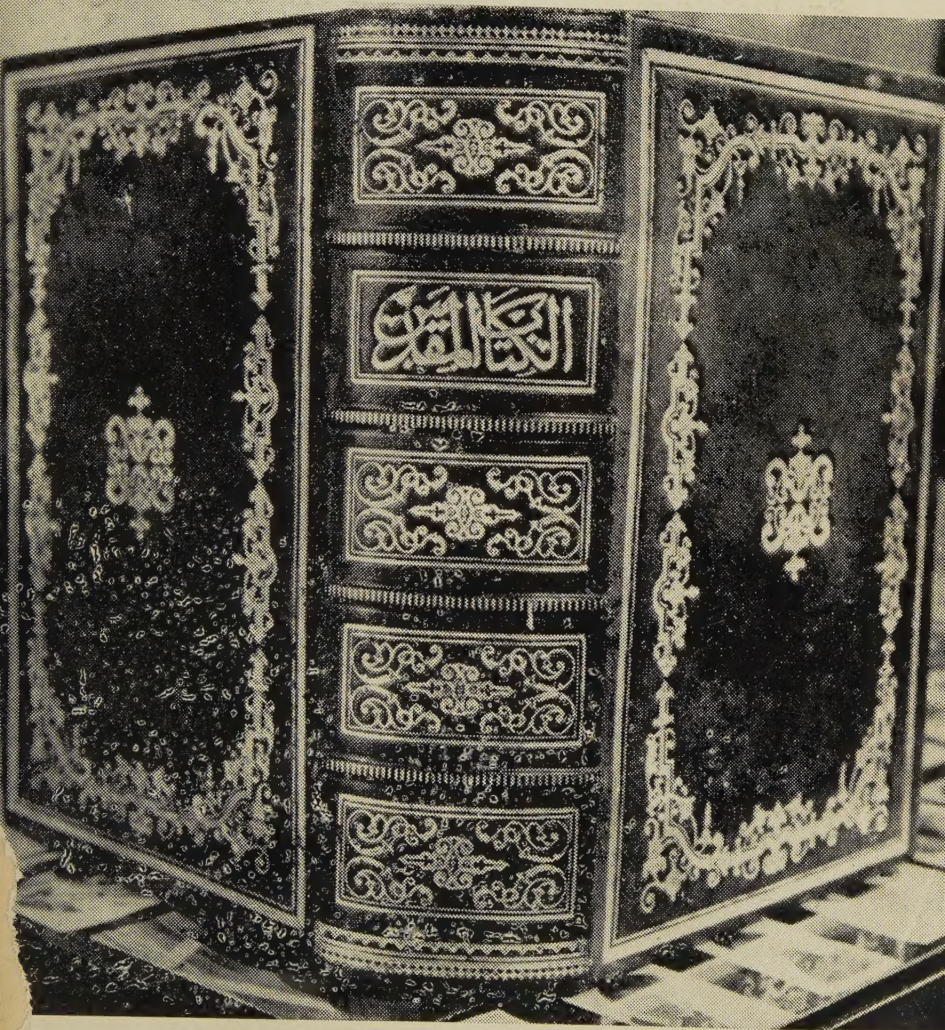
N. E. C. C.

NEWS BULLETIN

OF THE NEAR EAST CHRISTIAN COUNCIL

"FROM IRAN TO MOROCCO-FROM TURKEY TO THE SUDAN"

APRIL, 1958-*about 1960*



"SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES"

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Rev. Farid Audeh, Rev. Harry G. Dorman, Jr., Rev. Adle
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For the List of Correspondents see the back page of this Bul-
letin. All news items and reports for publication should be sent
to:—

Rev. Harry G. Dorman.
P.O.Box 235.
Beirut, Lebanon.

NEWS BULLETIN OF THE NEAR EAST CHRISTIAN COUNCIL FOR MISSIONARY CO-OPERATION

From Iran to Morocco

From Turkey to the Sudan

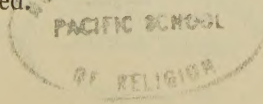
April, 1958

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BISHOP LESSLIE NEWBIGIN

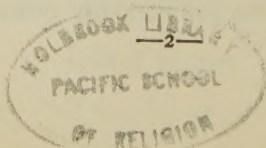
At the Triennial Conference of the Near East Christian Council, which will be held at Beirut in April, we hope to have Bishop Lesslie Newbigin with us. He will lead us in our devotions at the beginning of each session and will preach at one of the Evening Services. His presence will be an inspiration to us, and at this particular time it has an added significance. In this generation the Churches are more conscious of "our unhappy divisions" than ever in the past. In the N.E.C.C. we realise the paramount necessity for a united stand against Islam, and that, with money and manpower as they are, all unnecessary overlapping must be avoided. In our area there are at least three schemes for reunion; no one of them has yet reached a very advanced stage, but they do exist. Now Bishop Lesslie Newbigin is Bishop in Madurai in South India, and the Union of the Churches in South India is the pilot scheme by which any Churches that are seriously contemplating reunion must inevitably be guided.



In his delightful book, "A South India Diary", the Bishop describes the historic scene in St. George's Cathedral, Madras, on September 27, 1947. He tells how the signed copies of the scheme of union with the signatures of all the ministers assenting to it were laid on the Holy Table. "I declare that these three Churches are now become one Church of South India." There was a peal from the organ and four thousand voices broke into the Te Deum. "We look at each other with a kind of wonder; we are no longer friendly strangers, but brothers in one household... our first Communion together, about 3,500 communicants taking part, is a true foretaste of the heavenly banquet."

The Bishop's first task was to get into touch with the congregations and there were 550 of them! "It must be clear from the outset that a bishop is primarily a pastor, not a bureaucrat." He describes how he was welcomed in the villages with banners "which made a fairly good attempt at spelling the name of the bishop." Every experienced priest and pastor will be in hearty agreement with Bishop Newbigin when he speaks of "the kind of pastoral visit from which the pastor receives infinitely more than he gives." Dangers to the Church in South India are exactly the same as they are in any country where the Church is at work. "Ministration is swallowed up in administration... that trend which makes pastors desire a drawerful of files far more than a shelfful of books."

South India is not the Near East. There are similarities, but there are also differences, and of course the differences from the Churches of the West are even more marked. In the West the Church is largely middle-class, but in South India the Church has become rooted among the lowest strata of society. The South Indian villages are "a vast human reservoir from which men have been recruited to do the hard and monotonous work of the world." The tea and rubber plantations of Ceylon and Malaya, the docks of Rangoon and Singapore have drawn their labour from South India. The Bishop calls the teacher-catechist "the real infantryman of the Church Militant here in South India", and that is probably true of many areas besides, notably the Southern Soudan, in which the Church is struggling to do her duty as a missionary Church. There is a striking passage in this book in which certain Hindus, confronted by the daily witness of the radiant Christianity of their wives, were asked why they did not become Christians. The sad reply came, "We understand enough of the principles of Christianity to know that it would involve a complete change in our business prac-



tices. We cannot afford it." And that is probably true, both in theory and practice, of other countries in the East.

In regard to forms of Church Services the Bishop has a comment that deserves the prayerful consideration of every thinking Christian. "It is one of the tragedies of the situation that the Churches which have given their ministers the maximum liberty of liturgical improvisations are those which have given them the minimum training in liturgical principles." Yet in the Church of South India innovations have been very definitely inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. A book of about forty songs has made full use of folk dance tunes, among which, very appropriately, there is the story of St. Peter set to a popular fisherman's shanty.

But for us in the Near East it is the question of reunion and all its many implications that are of paramount importance. "We did not unite because we wanted to, but because we believed it was the plainly revealed will of our Lord." And the Bishop reminds us of the question put to him at his consecration—"Will you diligently acquaint yourself with the various forms and methods of worship used in your diocese, and so advise the ministers and congregations committed to your charge that this Church may offer such worship as will be worthy of God's majesty and love, and a witness to those around them?"

Let us remind ourselves of the words of Bishop Stephen Neill that may fairly be quoted in this connexion. "The Gospels always take the view that decisions taken in time have consequences in eternity. Man is presented with a Yes and with a No; and all eternity depends on the choice that he make." Here we must consider another book, "The Household of God", also written by Bishop Lesslie Newbigin. Here is sincere Christian wisdom about the Church and her Mission. The Bishop warns us that we must not speak of the redemption of the world without accepting the hard geographical meaning of the phrase. If we do, "we depart altogether from the New Testament, where the names of actual countries and the details of actual journeys and the hopes and hazards of actual missionary adventure are all the time inextricably intertwined with theology. If, as theologians, we talk about the world, without meaning India, China, Africa, Russia, South America, as well as our own people, without meaning this actual globe and the nations which people it, we are talking unbiblical nonsense." "We cannot enjoy the fullness of salvation until we have it together in the fullness of His body the Church. The new man into which we would fain grow up is a corporate humanity,

wherein all the redeemed from every tribe and tongue are made one harmonious whole. Thus the tension which every Christian knows in his own experience between the new man and the old, between the Christ and the old Adam, is—in part at least—the tension of the uncompleted missionary task.”

The Bishop quotes Emil Brunner when he says, “The Church exists by mission as fire exists by burning.” And he makes this further comment, “In all the discussions between Catholics and Protestants as to the *esse* and *bene esse* of the Church, I do not remember to have heard the fact seriously faced that a Church which has ceased to be a mission has certainly lost the *esse*, and not merely the *bene esse* of a Church.” “It is impossible to reconcile with the New Testament the view which seems to be more or less accepted among the majority of Churchmen, that while missionary work is an admirable thing to do, within reasonable limits, it is not something without which the Church simply falls to the ground.” “We must say bluntly that when the Church ceases to be a mission, then she openly denies the titles by which she is adorned in the New Testament.”

The Bishop is equally outspoken when he deals with modern missionary strategy. “It is taken for granted that the missionary obligation is one that has to be met after the needs at home have been fully met; that existing gains have to be thoroughly consolidated before we go further afield; that the world-wide Church has to be built up with the same sort of prudent calculation of resources and costs as is expected of any business enterprise. Must we not contrast this with the sort of strategy that the New Testament reveals, which seems to be a sort of determination to stake out God’s claim to the whole world at once, without expecting that one area should be fully worked out before the next is claimed?... Our present methods show little sign of being able to achieve the enormous new advances which are necessary if the vast unevangelised regions are to be reached.” This lesson can be applied to the Churches of the Near East as well as to the village Churches of South India. The congregation of the faithful will receive “its training in churchmanship precisely in the discharge of its missionary responsibility. “Consolidation” will not be the alternative to advance: on the contrary, advance will be the method of consolidation.”

“The Household of God” was first published in 1953, but much of the Bishop’s truly prophetic comment might very well have been inspired by recent conferences in Ghana and elsewhere... “just as

we must insist that a Church which has ceased to be a mission contradicts part of the essential character of the Church, so we must also say that a mission which is not at the same time truly a Church is not a true expression of the divine apostolate. An un-churchly mission is as much a monstrosity as an unmissionary Church." There are warnings also for those who approach schemes for reunion in the wrong spirit and not with a penitent consciousness of the tragedy of divisions. "Certainly a desire for union which subordinated truth to administrative convenience, or which aimed to produce a kind of impression on the world other than the impression which the Holy Spirit produces—the impression of mere size, for instance—would have to be condemned as intrinsically bad." At the same time, "In so far as the Church is disunited her life is a direct and public contradiction of the Gospel, and she is convicted of substituting some partial or sectional message for the good news of the one final and sufficient atoning act wrought in Christ for the whole human race. There is one Lord, one faith, one atoning act, and one baptism by which we are made participants in that atonement. In so far as we, who share that faith and that baptism, prove ourselves unwilling or unable to agree together in one fellowship, we publicly proclaim our disbelief in the sufficiency of that atonement... We cannot be Christ's ambassadors, beseeching all men to be reconciled to God, except we ourselves be willing to be reconciled one to another in Him... It is no accident that the modern movement for Christian reunion is a byproduct of the modern missionary movement, and that its chief impetus has come from the areas where the Church has been formed by missionary expansion outside the frontiers of the old Christendom... The reality of what Christians have in common is seen to be of an importance far outweighing everything that divides Christians one from another."

Bishop Newbigin's final paragraph should be carefully considered, with prayer, by all such bodies as the Near East Christian Council. "The unity of the Church will not distil out of a process of purely theological discussion... The so-called 'non-theological factors' in the situation are as much God's concern as the theological, and ought to be as much ours. Our task is, firstly, to call upon the whole Church to a new acceptance of the missionary obligation to bring the whole world to obedience to Christ; secondly, to do everything in our power to extend the area of co-operation between all Christians in the fulfilment of that task, by seeking to draw into the fellowship of the oecumenical movement those who at present stand outside of it to the right and to the left; and third-

ly, to press forward unwearyingly with the task of reunion in every place, until all who in every place call upon the name of Jesus are visibly united in one fellowship, the sign and instrument of God's purpose to sum up all things in Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be all the glory."

GHANA, IBADAN, AND THE NEAR EAST

The meeting of the International Missionary Council Assembly in Ghana from December 28, 1957, to January 8, 1958, stands in the great tradition of the ecumenical conferences of Edinburgh, 1910, of Jerusalem, 1928, of Madras, 1938, of Whitby, 1947, and of Willingen, 1952. Two hundred delegates from all over the world gathered at the University College outside Accra, representing the thirty-five member national councils; and at this meeting, three new councils applied for membership and were accepted, the Christian Councils of Ghana, of Hongkong, and of Northern Rhodesia.

Many of the great world figures who have been concerned with the drawing together of the churches during the past decades were present at the Assembly. Dr. John Mackay, President of Princeton Seminary, presided as Chairman, and Dr. Charles Ranson as Executive Secretary conducted much of the business. Dr. Visser 't Hooft, Executive Secretary of the World Council of Churches, was present, as well as many others connected with the work of the World Council and its various Divisions. Leaders of the missionary movement from every continent were there, the so-called "younger churches" playing a much larger part than in any previous Assembly, especially through the national delegates from Asia.

The theme of the Assembly was "*The Christian Mission at This Hour*", and in accordance with it the delegates together sought to grapple with the question: To what is God calling us *now*? What old patterns need now to be thrown out and what new directions be taken, as we seek to express our obedience to God's call through missionary action? It was a working conference. Each delegate belonged to one of six committees, which met several times to work out problems connected with the following six topics: budget and organization, the ministry, missionary study centers, inter-church aid and refugee work, the structure of cooperation, and new forms of missionary activity. Each delegate also belonged to one of five "groups" which met similarly for study and discussion of these

five subjects: The missionary imperative in the world community, the witness of the church in society, the Christian witness to the non-Christian religions, partnership in obedience, and missionary problems in the new situation.

Bishop Lesslie Newbigin of the Church of South India was elected chairman of the International Missionary Council to succeed Dr. Mackay; (the Near East Christian Council is fortunate in having him to lead our devotional thinking at its Triennial Meeting in April.) Dr. Charles Ranson was nominated as Secretary of the new Theological Education Fund, to which Mr. John D. Rockefeller had contributed an initial two million dollars on condition that another two million be raised through the mission boards. (Eight American boards had raised the second two million, and other contributions were expected.) The successor to Dr. Ranson as Executive Secretary of the IMC has not been announced.

Several plenary sessions of the Assembly were given to the most engrossing item of business, that is, the proposed integration of the International Missionary Council with the World Council of Churches. While the majority of the delegates were from the first clearly in favor of integration in some form, there were some who had very strong misgivings. It became apparent that some national councils, especially in Africa, might feel obliged to withdraw from membership if the two Councils become integrated into one. Especially in Africa is it the case that some national councils, members of the IMC, are supported by missions or church groups unwilling to commit themselves to the ecumenical movement as represented by the WCC. The national councils of Asia, on the other hand, seemed impatient to get on with the business of integration and thus be rid of whatever confusion is caused by duplication of organization in the things that both great Councils are working on together.

The delegates of the Near East Christian Council, Dr. Farid Audeh, Rev. Adle Nakhosteen, and the Executive Secretary, had been instructed to present a statement from the NECC, approving integration in principle, but requesting that "time and opportunity be given, if possible, for discussion on all levels within the countries of the Near East, especially between representatives of the Eastern Churches and of the missionary movement, of the issues involved in Christian witness and proselytism." This statement made recognition of the fact that in the Near East, perhaps more than in any other area, certain misunderstandings and difficulties are felt in regard to the necessity of opportunity for free Christian witness on

the one hand and the evils of "sheepstealing" on the other. In the end, the Assembly voted to approve integration "in principle", but to ask for further discussion of it and advice upon it from the member councils. In accordance with this action, the WCC has since then voted to postpone its next meeting, scheduled for December, 1960, in Ceylon, to 1961, giving time to the IMC to receive again from its member councils advice on integration, before final action is taken in the IMC and then the WCC.

Meanwhile there is opportunity for groups in the Near East to study this most important matter of the relation of the Eastern Churches to Christian evangelical witness. The thinking of some has already been guided in our area in inter-denominational discussions based on the valuable pamphlet put out by the WCC entitled a "*Provisional Report: Christian Witness, Proselytism and Religious Liberty*." Copies either in French or in English can be had from the office of the NECC Secretary.

The IMC Assembly was to some extent cloistered from the life of Africa, installed as the delegates were in the delightful and beautiful courtyards of the new University College outside the capital. It was too early for the tall orchids that spring up almost overnight on the hillside above the University after the first rains, and almost too early for the delicious mangoes from the wide plantations just beyond the hill. It was not too early for the pineapples, big and juicy, a single one of which, carved and served up in the evening on the edge of the lotus pool in the central courtyard, made a feast for a whole cluster of delegates. But early or late is the same for the great twelve-foot ant-hills that stand about the meadows and the bush just beyond the campus limits, lifting their deep red pinnacles out of the red soil, innocent and harmless at a distance, but deadly destructive when they appear nearer the houses and fences and gardens. The weekend gave delegates a chance to visit the villages and towns further afield and to see something of life away from the capital city. My preaching assignment was in Larteh, nearly an hour's drive distant, in the heavily forested hills that overlook the maritime plain. In this small town a thousand men and women were at the service in the great stone church, the greater part of them understanding English and not in need of the translation that followed the sermon. As in many churches, there was music from two choirs, the first being the more formal church choir using anthems and traditional church music, and the second being the young people's song group, a movement that is introducing into the churches a more popular type of gospel song based on the African rhythms and syncopations. Later, in the street, we

watched a procession of women preparing for the Salvation Army service of harvest thanksgiving. They marched in two lines down the street, great yams and other fruits or gifts for the church carried on their heads, while they sang and danced along to the stirring accompaniment of the brass band that followed. In this formation they moved down the street and back up it again, drawing after them a crowd for the service in the church. A low little witch doctor's courtyard by the side of the road, with idols standing about, seemed quite deserted.

The strange juxtaposition of primitive Africa and Africa enlightened, of the "dark continent" of the past and the great opportunities opening out before Africa in these new days, was emphasized in the address of Dr. Nkrumah, Prime Minister of Ghana, to the delegates at the garden party given in their honor. "You see Africa", he said. "You see the ambitions and hopes of millions of Africans who, so far, have had the crumbs of civilization falling from the rich tables of the western world. The Africans of today are only at the beginning of their adventure. They need education; they need advancement... I would say that the unity you represent here and the further unity which you seek in these talks, are symbols of the whole world's profoundest need. We salute your efforts."

The place of the church in this new period of Africa's development was powerfully brought home to us in the conference that followed the IMC Assembly, that is, the All-Africa Church Conference at Ibadan in the neighboring country of Nigeria. To this meeting there came for the first time representatives from the Church all over Africa to spend ten days together in Christian fellowship, talking of the needs of Africa and the opportunities before the church, and comparing problems and challenges as they appeared to Christians from Ethiopia to Liberia, and from the Sudan to the Union of South Africa. The Conference met in the grounds and buildings of St. Anne's School at Ibadan, where all two hundred of us were entertained as the guests of the Christian Council of Nigeria. Sir Francis Ibiam as chairman of the conference, and Lady Ibiam as hostess and leader of church women, made us welcome to Nigeria. The conference theme was "*The Church in Changing Africa*", and the theme was discussed in five settings as groups met to discuss these five topics: the Church, youth, and the family; the Church and economic life; the Church and politics; the Church and culture; the growing Church. As Christians from widely differing cultures and countries and from

various denominations in Africa met together for the first time, they were feeling a solidarity, a oneness in Christ, as they faced the great tasks before them, which had never been felt in the same way before.

The "*Message to the Churches of Africa*" sent out by this Conference said in part: "We the delegates of the First All-Africa Church Conference that has ever been held in Africa, rejoice that God has called us together, and in His Name we send greetings from Ibadan in Nigeria to all the Churches of Africa... Although our languages are many, our reason for coming here is the same, that we love the Lord Jesus Christ and are witnesses to His Gospel, that in Him we are one people, whether we speak Ibo, Yoruba, Douala, English, Afrikaans, Zulu, Sesuto, Portuguese, French, Kikuyu, or any other language that is spoken by the people who live in Africa. We are one in Him who was born a Jew in Bethlehem, fled from Herod into Egypt, grew up in Nazareth, died in Jerusalem, arose there and lives today in Ibadan and in every other city and village in the world that His Father created... In a continent where such massive events lie ahead, we thank God that the Christian Church has taken such deep root... The continent of Africa will see unparalleled events and changes during the rest of this century, welcomed by some, feared by others. We pray that the Christian Church of Africa will play its role as champion, teacher, counsellor and shepherd during these crucial years. We are humbly aware of our responsibilities to God and to this continent, and dedicate ourselves anew to their performance, trusting that we shall be led and supported by our fellow-Christians throughout Africa and the world."

WORKING TOGETHER IN THE NEAR EAST

(This article is based on a booklet written by S.A. Morrison, not very long before his death, and published by the Highway Press in 1955.)

There is an Arab proverb that says, "You cannot clap with only one hand." In a vivid phrase it points to the futility of isolated action. It takes two hands to clap. Even so in the work of the Churches in the Near East there must inevitably be much unnecessary overlapping and wasted effort unless the Christian forces can learn to co-operate. To the student of Church history the early contacts of the Oecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople

with the Reformed Churches of the West are full of interest: in the sixteenth century the Patriarch was in touch with Lutherans, Calvinists and the German theologians of Tübingen; early in the seventeenth century relations were established with the Anglican Church. In 1740 the great Count Zinzendorf of the Moravian Church sent Gräfin to the Patriarch with a message of goodwill and with the intention of sharing with the Eastern Orthodox Church the riches of the evangelical heritage. The pioneers of the British and American missionary societies had the same general objective in mind. The life-giving movements of the Renaissance and the Reformation, which transformed the character of Western Christianity, had not been able to get behind the Islamic curtain of Moslem intolerance which separated Churches of East and West. The Reformed Churches of Great Britain and the United States of America felt a burden of responsibility in this respect; they opened schools for boys and girls, they circulated copies of the Scriptures and Christian pamphlets, they attempted to establish centres for the training of Church leaders. It was not their intention to "proselytise" in the first instance. But there were misunderstandings and it was then that the Protestant Churches of the Near East came into being. The pioneers hoped that these Churches, under God, would be the instruments for the conversion of Moslem and Jew. But the response was always more encouraging among nominal Christians than it was among the non-Christian population, and only too often "the frailty of our mortal nature" leads us to take the easier way.

It has been said that if I attract somebody from your Church to mine, I should call it "evangelism"; on the other hand if you should attract somebody from my Church to yours, I should call it "proselytism". "Proselytism" is a word that is often bandied about when the Churches meet in conference. In 1920 the Oecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople issued an Encyclical in which he appealed to the Churches of the West not to engage in proselytism. Both points of view, that of the Churches of the East and that of the Reformed Churches, are readily understood by any sympathetic observer, and it must always be remembered that the system of "millets" which operated in the Ottoman Empire tended to accentuate the differences, not only between Christian, Jew and Moslem, but also between the various Christian Churches. "Divide et impera" has not infrequently been the policy of imperialists! Each community had its own court for jurisdiction in such matters as marriage, divorce and inheritance, and without such a court members would be deprived of legal status. But this system made

movement from one Church to another rather complicated; it involved not only a change of theological belief but also a change of community status.

Despite the disappointment of the early missionary pioneers the vision of a revived Christianity throughout the Near East has never been entirely lost. The small Anglican Church in Egypt produced "Working Principles", drawn up by Canon Temple Gairdner in consultation with Bishop Gore and approved by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1923. They affirm that the primary aim of the Church is the evangelization of the non-Christian population and that they do not desire to draw away adherents from other Churches, Ancient or Reformed. Earlier than that, in 1920, Bishop Gwynne and Canon Temple Gairdner formed the Fellowship of Unity; under its auspices members of the Orthodox, Anglican and Evangelical Churches meet periodically for fellowship and study. The Fellowship has served a valuable purpose in drawing together Christians of very different doctrinal and sacramental traditions, and there has been an annual service of united worship, held each year in a different Church. In Moslem countries there are many complex issues facing the Churches in their relations with governments, and these call for united action. In 1946 a Committee of Liaison was formed, including representatives of all the important Churches; this serves as a forum for the interchange of ideas and opinions on all questions of common interest. As mutual confidence grew this Committee of Liaison was able to promote united action in literacy campaigns, in work among the blind and in the preparation of an agreed syllabus of Christian instruction for use in government schools. United Weeks of Witness were arranged from time to time; at a service held in the precincts of the Coptic Catholic Church in Old Cairo the leader was a priest of the Coptic Orthodox Church while the preacher was an Anglican layman. Christian experience in Egypt is outstanding in this respect; there are probably few countries in the world where co-operation in work and witness between so varied a group of Churches has been carried so far.

Similar movements for closer fellowship have developed in other countries of the Near East. In Jerusalem close liaison is maintained between the Anglican Bishopric and the Orthodox and Uniate Churches. Anglican chaplains have taught in theological seminaries of the Eastern Orthodox and Armenian Churches. In Iran the Anglican Bishop seeks to help and serve the Armenian and Nestorian Churches. Laymen have played their part as well; the Society for the Salvation of Souls was founded in Assiout, in Upper

Egypt, in 1927 with a definitely evangelical programme. This Society now claims fifteen branches in many parts of Egypt, many of them with sub-branches, and seventy per cent, of the members are from the Coptic Orthodox Church. At Malakal, in the Southern Soudan, a number of Churches-Orthodox, Anglican and Evangelical-united in erecting a single church building for their co-operative use. The activities of the Inter-Church Aid Department of the World Council of Churches represent one of the most recent and promising developments in the way of co-operation.

Sunday Schools and Christian education are fields in which, obviously, there are great possibilities for co-operation, and such co-operation will help to avoid over-lapping and unnecessary expense. When workers and money alike are in short supply, this is essential. Iran has been quick to realise the importance of this and there is a Church Council representing the Presbyterian Churches of the north and the Anglican Churches of the south; this Council has several vigorous functional committees. There is a committee on Church Union which is paving the way for a more intimate relationship between the two Churches. For several years there has been a joint School of Evangelism. A youth committee organises an inter-Church youth conference. A committee on religious education has prepared handbooks for teachers in Sunday Schools. And in this work Iran does not stand alone. The Bible Lands Union for Christian Education serves the cause in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, and there are similar organizations in other countries of the Near East. The aim of these unions is to foster the Sunday School movement in the Armenian, Eastern Orthodox and Coptic Churches as well as in the numerous Evangelical Churches.

The work of the Bible Societies is so well-known an example of Christian co-operation that no detailed mention or explanation is needed here. The 150th anniversary of the foundation of the British and Foreign Bible Society is still fresh in the memories of many readers and did much to promote interest in the work of the Societies and to secure increased support. As only one instance out of many that might be quoted, a Bible Festival was held in Beirut and this was attended by the President of the Lebanese Republic. An active lay reform movement in the Coptic Church of Egypt is based on the Bible and called "Friends of the Bible." It now has many branches in places where Coptic students are to be found and takes the place among Copts of the Student Christian Movement. "Friends of the Bible", a Coptic Society, is itself an example of Christian co-operation, for the credit for its foundation must

be given to two famous Anglican missionaries, Douglas Thornton and Temple Gairdner.

In an area in which Arabic is the mother tongue of the majority of Christians the missions were quick to realise that the production of Christian literature should be organised on a linguistic or regional basis to secure the greatest economy and efficiency. The work of the Arabic Christian Literature Committee, under the able leadership of Habeeb Said, is well known; their publications range from expositions of the Trinity and Incarnation to books for children and books to give help in farming their land to those who have benefited by literacy campaigns. The work of revision and translation never ceases, and surely the translations of "Christian Books" into Arabic must have guided the thoughts of thousands in the Near East. There is also a Fellowship of Christian Writers which aims at encouraging young authors and fostering the publication of suitable Christian literature. Iran has her own inter-Church Literature Committee which deals with publications in the Persian language; the number of pages printed in 1956 was 3,914,000 and the books published ranged from Bishop Stephen Neill's "God of the Christians" to Sunday School lesson books and such stories with a Christian basis as "Ben Hur." The Literature Department of the American Board of Missions is responsible for Christian publications in Turkish and in 1956 these included a study of the Lord's Prayer and the Beatitudes and a reprinting of the Redhouse English-Turkish dictionary. Other publications that foster a more sympathetic feeling between the Churches of the area are legion. It must suffice to mention here "Sobornost", published by the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, with its scholarly articles on the Orthodox Church, the "Oecumenical Review" and a publication sponsored by the Greek Catholic Church in Beirut with an oecumenical viewpoint and a sincere endeavour to explain the traditions, history and liturgies of the Churches. One might add here the "Cenacle Libanais" which promotes every year a series of lectures that are probably the best attended in the Lebanon; in January, 1957, the chosen subject was "Problems of the Oecumenical Movement"; Orthodoxy, Protestantism and the Churches of the Roman obedience were all represented by eminent speakers, and the lectures were subsequently published in book form. This is worth mentioning because the present writer has discovered in his contacts that many who before had never given the Oecumenical Movement a thought had their interest aroused and were beginning to ask questions.

Schools in the Near East are almost invariably very "mixed."

But good schools, and especially those sponsored by Churches or missionary societies, afford a unique opportunity for children of different faiths and creeds to meet together in the classroom and on the playing-field. This must help to break down the divisive communal spirit that is so characteristic of the area. Let us take as one example the British Lebanese Training College in Beirut which is sponsored by an interdenominational missionary society, the British Syrian-Lebanese Mission. Of the 650 girls the vast majority were, of course, Lebanese by nationality but nevertheless there were girls from twenty-six other countries, some of them from lands virtually closed to the Gospel. One boarder, for instance, came from Cabul and came to the school because two other Afghans had written to say how happy they were. There are Moslems from Iran and Iraq and Saudi Arabia, there are girls from India and Pakistan, and even from as far away as Indonesia. These girls represent many different Churches and six non-Christian religions—Moslems, Druzes, Jewesses, Hindus, Bahais and a Parsee! The Bible is a new book to many of them, and to many of the Christians so-called a book very imperfectly understood, and the school Bible lessons cannot be without effect on the adolescent mind. Here also is co-operation in the persons of children and teachers, and here also, we pray, is the “seed growing secretly.”

The same is true of many schools sponsored by many nations in the Near East. It certainly is true, or was true, of the English Mission College in Cairo, now the Episcopal Mission College; this school had the distinction of bringing to Christ a family in Japan! A Japanese businessman in Cairo sent his daughter to the school and one day the teacher received a bewildered note “Who is John 3.16?” The teacher explained, as the girl had been unable to explain fully, and long after a letter came from Kobe to say that the family had become Christian. Almost any school of any size, run under Christian auspices, can quote similar examples. You cannot thwart the Holy Spirit of God.

Youth movements continue though the fact that nationalism holds the minds of many young men and young women in its grip presents a serious difficulty. In the Lebanon there is a Christian Youth Federation, and two oecumenical work camps have been carried through successfully—the building of a conference hall at Schweir in 1953 and the repairing and redecoration of the Evangelical Orphanage at Abayh in 1954.

Christian co-operation extends, as it rightly should, to the training of priests and pastors. The Near East School of Theology in Beirut, though designed primarily to serve the Evangelical

Churches, has given theological training to Anglicans and the Orthodox. The American University of Beirut undertakes to train men preparing for the priesthood in the Eastern Orthodox and Armenian Churches; indeed an Orthodox Archimandrite now working in the city attended the American University and lodged in a hostel organized by a priest of the Anglican Church!

All Christian educational institutions benefit by an agreed policy in such matters as scales of salary, the school syllabus and teacher training. A wide diversity in scales of salary causes ill-feeling and creates misunderstanding. All Christian educationists benefit by discussing text-books and methods, and at this time every Christian school must make its decision as to policy according to the dictates of conscience when confronted by the regulations of a government that is predominantly Moslem. Uncertainty as to the future, upheavals and expulsions make their task even more difficult. But these very upheavals in recent years and the recurrence of what we in the Near East have come to call "troubles" have given rise to new instances of ready and willing co-operation.

What is true of Christian schools applies also in many cases to Christian hospitals. Agreed salary scales for doctors and nurses are obviously desirable. Doctors and nurses, male and female, can be sent from one place to another to get specialised training, and if a group of hospitals in a given area can agree on a common strategy, it becomes possible for one hospital to specialise in one particular form of medical work. The British Medical Association now holds an annual conference in one or other of the countries of the Near East, and there is a move on foot to revive a Christian Medical Association under the auspices of the Near East Christian Council. In countries where self-seeking is a vice far from unknown, the Christian hospital has a part to play in inculcating the ideas of vocation and service. The doctor and the nurse are Christian specialists; the teacher is a Christian specialist in this modern age. And all who are engaged in specialist work of any kind—rural life, infant welfare, improved methods of agriculture, home life—benefit by conferences which enable them to learn from the achievements (and the mistakes!) of others. The sharing of ideas under the guidance of God is Christian co-operation at its best. Radio-audio-visual aids are an obvious example of a department of Christian work where the help and advice of the specialist is essential.

So far in this article we have made mention of movements and organisations that have come into being through the God-guided initiative of individual Christians, groups of individual

Christians or single Christian missions. We have tried to show that by co-operation overlapping may be avoided, administrative expenses reduced and that from such co-operation may spring a more effective witness. There is no field of Christian service in our area in which Christians can benefit more from each other's experience than in the field of evangelism. We have to consider the intrinsic complexity of the problem in Moslem lands. The scales are heavily weighted against the winning of any Moslem to Christ. His family and his community are bitterly opposed to his conversion; he is subjected to numerous disabilities—the possible loss of his wife, his inheritance and his job. The teaching of the Koran creates in his mind a bias against the Gospel message, and the "unhappy divisions" of the Christian Churches puzzle him. But this is not to say that at the time of our Lord's Second Coming in judgement many Moslems will not rise as Christians.

Inter-Mission Councils usually have their own Committees to deal with the question of evangelism. Together Christian workers can weigh up the value of the controversial method of approach, the eirenic, the theological and the mystical. They can study together how the Gospel should be presented to a student of El Azhar, a modern young man infected perhaps by Communism or materialism, a dervish with a mystical bent or an uneducated farmer or artisan. They learn to contrast the advantages of the long-term method—leavening the thought of the Moslem community with Christian ideas—and the more direct method of winning converts.

S.A. Morrison remarks that the Inter-Mission Councils of the Near East have seldom had to handle those difficult problems of comity which have figured in the agenda of similar councils elsewhere. Agreements regarding the demarcation of areas of influence have been reached as the result of direct negotiations. For instance, in Egypt the three largest Missions—the Church Missionary Society, the United Presbyterian Mission and the Egypt General Mission—decided by consultation on which provinces they would concentrate their efforts. But since the end of the second World War there has been an influx into the Near East of smaller Missions with a powerful evangelistic urge and apparently no lack of men and money. They consider that the local Evangelical Churches and the Ancient Churches have "lost their drive" and try to attract their members. At times they accuse other Churches of having deviated to a greater or less degree from the fundamentals of the Christian faith, and this without any very extensive experience of the forms of worship and theological writing of other Churches. It is noteworthy in this connexion to quote the example of Llewellyn Gwynne, then Bishop

in Egypt. When a Coptic Bishop offered to join the Anglican Church with all his flock, the Bishop refused to accept his offer and, on the contrary, used his good offices to reconcile them with their own Church. The same has happened more than once in the Lebanon. Before the present Church of All Saints was built, the churchwardens arrived for an evening Service in an older Church and found that it was a case of "standing room only". The Church room had been filled by the Orthodox! They were aggrieved as the result of some administrative quarrel, but the Chaplain and Bishop Blyth managed to pour oil on troubled waters and peace was restored.

It can be easily understood, in the present political situation, that Christian nationals in the Near East fear that they may be regarded as the stooges of a foreign organisation. There is a widespread opinion that foreign missionaries are paid agents of the government of the countries from which they come, and it is in consequence suspected that their aims are political and cultural as well as spiritual and ethical. But it must be said, to the lasting credit of the Christian communities, that it is outside the ranks of the Christian Churches that this opinion flourishes and even there it is propagated for political motives that are not of the purest.

One of the first area councils to be set up in the Near East was the United Missionary Council of Syria and Palestine which came into being in 1919. The word "Missionary" is always suspect and the title has since been changed to the United Christian Council of South-West Asia while its boundaries have been enlarged. In 1920 negotiations began to establish the Egypt Inter-Mission Council, and here again the intention is to make this a "Christian Council of Egypt." In other areas similar movements towards consultation and co-operation have been begun.

St. Paul counselled Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist." Some of us feel in our more despondent moments that we have been called upon to "do the work of an organizer or administrator." But it is quite certain that any thoughtful Christian in the Near East will pray, and pray regularly, to Almighty God for the gift of truly Christian co-operation. The efforts of individuals, individual Churches and these inter-Church Councils must be coordinated so that expert advice may be at the disposal of all the member Churches, and this is where the Near East Christian Council steps onto the stage. Born in 1927 the Council is advancing from strength to strength and a first move has now been made to attract the Ancient Churches. All who attend the Triennial Conference will agree that they derive much benefit from the fellowship of Christian

workers who have come from the whole area. Disagreements in matters relating to Church organization, or liturgy, or ways of worship, do not in any way affect the importance of fellowship between Christians belonging to different Churches. The Near East Christian Council does not pose as a dictator with a "take it or leave it" attitude. The decisions taken by the Council are not binding on the member Churches. They meet for consultation and the discussion of mutual problems. The authority of the Council lies in "the influence which grows out of the recognised soundness of its judgements, the worth of its investigations and the reasonableness of its proposals." No doctrinal statement has ever been formulated to which members must subscribe, but they all give glad allegiance to the doctrine of salvation through the Cross of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Bible as the revealed word of God to man.

Anyone who reads this News Bulletin must have a fairly clear idea of the many activities of the Near East Christian Council. Many of our most experienced observers think that a new era of opportunity seems to be opening up before the Council in 1958 and 1959. This must not be a movement towards unity for unity's sake. The sole reason that will justify our fellowship in the Council is the sure knowledge that in a time of difficulty and perplexity it is only thus that we can make our witness to Jesus Christ more effective. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

HOMELESS AND IN EXILE

Dr. Norman Goodall after a recent tour in the Near East described the problem of the Arab Refugees as "the canker which lies at the heart of the situation in the absence of a political settlement" and added the shrewd comment that "in the mood now prevailing even the word 'reconciliation' has become offensive." Recent political developments in the area and financial stringency have now made the position even more critical. The appalling phrase "hard core refugees" has become current to describe the human leavings after the labour market has been picked over by interested countries.

In January, 1958, Mr. Thomas Jamieson, Assistant Director in Charge of the Department of Operations, U.N.R.W.A., spoke to the Central Coordinating Committee of the Voluntary Agencies about the situation confronting the Director, Mr. H. Labouisse, as

he made his report to the representatives of the eighty-three nations who are members of the Assembly of U.N. The U.S.A. has regularly contributed 70 o/o of the total budget and Great Britain about 20 o/o. The remaining 10 o/o comes from the other eighty-one members of U.N. The one important and new decision was to place the responsibility for raising the funds for the U.N.R.W.A. programme on the Secretary-General, Mr. Hammerskjold, rather than leave it any longer to the various governments to make their contributions on their own initiative. We who live and work in the Near East know that there is a very real danger that the Refugee Problem may become the focus of a world crisis.

The outlook for the rehabilitation budget is anything but hopeful, and this immediately affects the educational programme of the Agency. Dr. Felix Walter has explained that this programme has passed through three phases in the course of its existence. The first phase he calls the "Primitive Period" when U.N.R.W.A. operated its teaching programme in austere surroundings with classes in tents, inadequate supplies and untrained teachers. The next phase saw a distinct improvement — the construction of school buildings, the training of teachers, and among other projects, the opening of the Kalendia and Gaza Vocational Training Centres. Now, because of the threat of drastic curtailment of funds, the educational programme is in a period of decline and there is a danger of a reversion to the first phase or even something worse. There are 100,000 pupils in 375 schools which are staffed by more than 3,000 teachers, 15,000 pupils at the secondary level and subsidies paid to the governments of host countries for another 55,000 elementary and pupils. U.N.R.W.A. is directly involved in the education of 170,000 refugee children. Dr. Felix Walter spoke of two characteristic secondary features of the educational work that U.N.R.W.A. has tried to do. "First, we try to follow an educational pattern that is identical with that already established in the host country. Secondly, we try to avoid distinctions between refugee and non-refugee pupils, since it is not desirable that the refugees should feel that they are different from the others."

Makeshift arrangements such as tented schools and double shifts of pupils have been gradually eliminated from the Agency's programme; there has been a marked increase in the number of girls attending school, a handicrafts programme has been introduced, and the status of the teachers has been raised to the standard prevailing in the host countries. But, on the debit side, shortage of funds has meant that teacher training centres have had to be closed while the demand for secondary education is so great that

U.N.R.W.A. is unable to finance it. The best U.N.R.W.A. teachers are being induced to leave for other countries by promises of better pay and conditions of living; in Gaza alone 120 teachers have been lost in this way. U.N.R.W.A. subsidies amount to 10 dollars for elementary pupils and 40 dollars for secondary pupils, but Dr. Walter estimated the actual cost to the Agency to be 25 dollars and 75 dollars respectively.

All this is something of an achievement, but owing to shortage of funds there is a possibility that the school programme for 170,000 children may have to close at the end of June, 1958, and this would also mean unemployment for 3,000 teachers. Events are moving in an appallingly vicious circle at the moment. Economies must be made in the field of education; but it is only the skilled and the educated who are welcomed in other countries. If the school programme is curtailed, fewer refugees will be able to leave the camps and find their own work in the Arab world. U.N.R.W.A. have asked the Voluntary Agencies if they are prepared to accept greater responsibility for the refugees, but this is an important question of policy that will require further study. The Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches has spoken in no uncertain terms about the same problem; the Committee said that it was "apprehensive that the possible breakdown of the Agency's programmes will result not only in disastrous political repercussions but also in a tragic intensification of human suffering that is already intolerable."

In the meantime the Near East Christian Council Committee for Refugee Work, with Mr. A. Willard Jones as Executive Secretary, continues to function and bring a certain amount of light into the darkness of despair. From the financial point of view 1957 was a most satisfactory year. Donations in kind more than doubled in value as compared with 1956, while there was also a substantial increase in cash donations. This increased support has enabled the Committee to extend their work in the frontier villages and to provide more new and used clothing for the refugees. The workers have improved transport facilities, and, with this general expansion, the Committee has been able to increase the number of refugees employed in the various centres. Willard Jones and his wife have recently paid a visit to the Persian Gulf where they were warmly received and spoke to interested groups about the refugees from Palestine. It was stated by one official in the Sheikdom of Kuwait that 30,000 former Palestinians are living there; there are also large numbers in Bahrein and Saudi Arabia, but for these countries no accurate statistics are available.

When so much work is being done in the true spirit of Christian service by our Committee and our workers it is invidious to single out any particular development for comment. In Egypt the position has become more difficult. Restrictions on foreign trade have had the inevitable result that opportunities for employment are few and far between. The Egyptian Government has decided not to exempt Palestinians from the payment of school fees: the fees are not exorbitant, but when supplementary charges for sports and books and other things are taken into consideration the fees often total more than one family's entire income. As an indirect result the repayments of loans in the last months of 1956 were the lowest in the history of the Egypt loans programme. Meanwhile requests for medical help continue to flood the local office.

Willard Jones quotes in one report the counsel of the Psalmist when he bids us to "Sing unto the lord... who prepareth rain for the earth", and indeed the coming of the rain is normally a time of rejoicing. But this rejoicing is not shared by the thousands of peasant farmers in camps. With four square yards of stony ground or sandy soil in front of his hut there are no furrows for him to plough and no grain to sow. It is not easy for him to sing when the rain leaks through the roof and his poorly clad children shiver in the wintry winds that blow down from the snow on Hermon. Yet some planting has been done. There is an Arab saying that you plant a fig tree for yourself, an olive tree for your children and an oak tree for your grandchildren. Our team leader in Hebron, Mr. Robert Lapham, reports that he has distributed 6697 vines and fruit trees and 9345 forest trees to 647 farmers in seventeen villages in the district. The total cost only amounted to about 533 dollars which is little enough to pay for a farsighted policy that deserves every encouragement.

In West Jordan the feeding programme for children has been extended in the area of the frontier villages. This has been made possible by a gift from the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief. Meals are served to 2,221 children five days a week in seven villages and milk centres give out 2527 rations in eight villages daily. Other contributions to make this possible have come from the United Church of Canada and our Committee and workers are closely co-operating with U.N.I.C.E.F. Tools have been lent to those who have passed out of the El Arish Vocational Training School until they become established in trade and can buy their own; the tools are then withdrawn and lent to somebody else.

In the medical sphere the incidence of hookworm has been reduced from 65 o/o to 30 o/o, and the Committee feels justified in hoping that soon the disease will be eliminated. The hookworm



**"THY WORD IS A LANTERN UNTO MY FEET"
THE PLAQUE, COMMEMORATING THE TRANSLATION OF THE
BIBLE INTO ARABIC, IN THE AMERICAN GIRLS' SCHOOL,
BEIRUT. THE FIRST GIRLS' SCHOOL IN THE TURKISH EMPIRE**



**"THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL FLOURISH LIKE A PALM-TREE,
AND SHALL SPREAD ABROAD LIKE A CEDAR IN LEBANON!"**



**THE WHEAT AND THE TARES.
"LET BOTH GROW TOGETHER UNTIL THE HARVEST"**



**"THOU SHALT NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHEN
HE TREADETH OUT THE CORN".**



**"... THE GRASS OF THE FIELD, WHICH TODAY IS,
AND TOMORROW IS CAST INTO THE OVEN..."**



"PLAIN MEN DWELLING IN TENTS"



"THEN I WENT DOWN TO THE POTTER'S HOUSE. AND,
BEHOLD, HE WROUGHT A WORK ON THE WHEELS".



"STANDING IDLE IN THE MARKETPLACE".
UNEMPLOYED WORKMEN IN BEIRUT WHOSE TOOLS, AT THE
EDGE OF THE PAVEMENT, INDICATE THEIR TRADES.

lives in damp soil, penetrates the sole of the foot, gets to work in the intestines and is later discharged from the bowels to recontaminate the soil. U.N.R.W.A. provided leather for sandals and since 1955 6,116 pairs have been made. At such places as the Baptist Hospital in Gaza refugees, men and women, receive such medical and surgical attention as is to be found in the best hospitals of the West. Willard Jones speaks of a young woman surgeon, fresh from the U.S.A., operating to remove a gall stone. She waits until the anaesthetist has done what he has to do, bows her head in prayer, makes the incision and a few minutes later holds up a stone half the size of a human thumb. Recently our Committee in Gaza distributed drugs to the value of 3,000 dollars to the Baptist Hospital, the Public Health Department, and to U.N.R.W.A. In sending a letter of thanks for this gift Dr. James Young of the Baptist Hospital wrote, "I feel I am safe in saying that this gift will mean the difference between life and death for some of the patients who will be helped." Was it not the Son of God Himself who said, "Go, and do thou likewise"?

This report only covers a tiny part of the work for the Refugees that our Committee has done. All our workers would say that most of their energies are absorbed in the day to day routine of distribution and administration. But with inspired imagination and the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God some progress has been made. "I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat. . . Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me." It is good news to hear that Mrs. Willard Jones intends to write a report on the situation of the Arab Refugees in the Near East during the last ten years as seen through the eyes of our Committee. It is hoped that the report will be circulated before the middle of May. The refugee problem is one of the tragedies of our time, but it has given us an opportunity for Christian service.

THE FAITH AND PRACTICE OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

"Many shall come from the East..." A Church with 150 million members cannot be ignored. The Eastern Orthodox Church consists of a number of independent and self-governing Churches which together constitute the second largest organised body of Christians in the world. Geographically they lie for the most part at the meeting of East and West, and this has been a dominating factor in shaping their destinies. The Orthodox Church presents a spectacle of the most venerable antiquity and an impressive continuity which is second to none in Christendom. Up to a point an order of precedence among the independent Churches is recognised.

Thus the four ancient Patriarchates come first, in this order: Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem. Then comes the Church of Cyprus, after which there is no strict order of dignity. The smallest of the Churches is Sinai, which consists of no more than the monastery on the mountain. In Alexandria and Jerusalem the Patriarch himself and many of the hierarchy are Greek, but the enormous majority of Church members are Arabic-speaking. This was also so in the Patriarchate of Antioch until in 1900 the Orthodox secured the appointment of a Patriarch of their own race and language.

The Historical Background.

There must be some historical background if the Orthodox Church is to be understood. In the early centuries the fortunes of the Church were involved in the prolonged attempt of the civil power in Constantinople to hold together the disintegrating Roman Empire. But the Orthodox refused to collaborate in holding the East by compromise with heresy, just as later they declined to buy support from the West by acknowledging the Papal claims. History has sentenced the Orthodox to cherish their faith in the face of opposition; they have resisted the lures of material well-being and, as a result, they have their profound sense of the reality of the unseen spiritual world and their developed genius for corporate worship.

It was in the year 324 that Constantine, left sole master of the Roman world, chose Byzantium for his imperial seat; the centre of gravity of the Empire had already shifted to the East, and the city was the focal point of the great roads which linked Europe and Asia. Constantine, although he postponed his baptism until he was dying, was a Christian, and Christianity became a recognised religion in a despotic state, and the emperors sought to find in the Church a unifying force among their heterogenous subjects. At this time the Church had not yet worked out the intellectual expression of its own faith; indeed the Church was reluctant to make subtle definitions. The Councils met and promulgated their decisions simply because it was considered imperative to combat error. Most of the Bishops attending the Councils were from the East, and their work was an achievement of the Greek mind. There is some justification for the statement that the formulation of the Creed was the marriage of the Greek mind and the Christian faith. Controversy raged for 130 years and was especially concerned with the relation of the human and divine in the Person of Christ. There is the comment of a Roman historian—"The postal service was utterly ruined be-

cause the Emperor allowed the use of horses to troops of bishops who were constantly galloping hither and thither to the various synods, as they call them, in the endeavour to enforce agreement with their opinions." It was not until the fourth Oecumenical Council at Chalcedon in 451 that a final statement was reached; more than 600 Bishops were present though from the West there came only the four Papal legates and two others. They proclaimed that Christ was of one substance with the Father as touching His Godhead, but of one substance with us as touching His Manhood, and that the two Natures concur in one Person. But heresy and false doctrine was not the only disintegrating factor in the Christian world; the rivalry among the great sees of Christendom caused much discord. Alexandria with its huge population claimed to be the first city of the East. Antioch had its school of Christian theology and a distinctive tradition. The Church of Cyprus, because of its close connexion with St. Barnabas, had much prestige and became independent of Antioch. Jerusalem had passed through a period of tragic disasters and had not yet become a Patriarchate, but Byzantium, when the city became the New Rome, was not likely to be content with a mere Bishop. The main struggle, however, was between Alexandria and Constantinople; the mass of the Christian population of Egypt refused to accept the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon about the Person of Christ. They broke away to become the Coptic Church in Egypt and the Jacobite Church in Syria. This left Constantinople indisputably supreme in Eastern Christendom.

But there was also rivalry between East and West. Matters came to a head when Pope Felix III excommunicated Acacius in 484 and certain people were found—their irreverence must have equalled their courage—to pin the act of deposition onto the Patriarch's vestments as he was celebrating the Liturgy. Emperor after Emperor made efforts to bring together the Orthodox and the Coptic Church of Egypt, but without success. Of these Emperors the greatest was Heraclius who clearly saw the political urgency of an ecclesiastical settlement if the enemies of the Empire, and they were many, were to be repelled. But all attempts to reconcile the dissidents failed. An even greater danger now threatened the Empire. In 632 the Prophet Mohammed died; two years later the Arab tribes had crossed the frontiers of the Empire, Jerusalem fell in 637 and Alexandria in 641. Under the impact of Islam the political strains and tensions, and consequently the opportunities for ecclesiastical expansion, were entirely changed. Rome looked towards the Frankish territories of the West and Britain, Constantinople through the Balkans into Russia. Syria and Egypt were lost, and

there was no need to placate the heretics.

Orthodoxy now stands alone in the East, the religion of the Empire, and Orthodoxy was able in the ninth and tenth centuries to begin a great missionary movement and strengthen her position by securing the allegiance of the Slavs. The first Bulgarian king to receive baptism was Boris, one of the ablest monarchs in Bulgarian history. For some years the fate of Bulgaria hung in the balance, both Pope and Patriarch claiming the territory. Greek priests and books would be turned out, Latin priests and books would take their place, but finally the victory went to Constantinople. Centres for training the Slav clergy were established, Boris' successor, Simon, defeated the Emperor in war and declared his Church to be independent. As a result a religious instrument was ready to hand when the time came to evangelise Russia.

The early contacts of the Russians with Constantinople are shrouded in obscurity, but in the tenth century there were certainly Christians in Kiev with a Cathedral of Mar Elias. Here Vladimir is the great name in early Christian history, and it would not escape the attention of any intelligent man that culture and civilisation in his world were connected with Christianity while paganism belonged to the barbarous hordes against whom he warred. Even before the time of Vladimir books, and perhaps missionaries also, had arrived from Bulgaria. The Russian Church had a Slavonic liturgy from the beginning. It is perhaps as well at this juncture briefly to complete the story of Orthodoxy in Russia though this does not immediately concern the area in which the N.E.C.C. operates. In the Roman Empire the State adopted Christianity after it had won many of the people. In Russia the process was reversed; the princes accepted Christianity and then gradually imposed it on their subjects. Orthodoxy had reached its final form when Russia embraced it and the Russian Church was the nurse of the growing national spirit of Russia. The Church inspired the movement which threw back the Tartars. With the fall of Constantinople in 1453 the Balkans were submerged beneath the flood of the Turkish invasion, and this time roughly coincides with the liberation of Russia from the yoke of the Tartars. Moscow picked up the torch which fell from the dying hand of Constantinople. As the power and dignity of the Russian Tsar increased, it seemed only fitting that his chief Bishop should receive the supreme ecclesiastical title, and the Patriarchate of Moscow came into being in 1589. Little more than a hundred years later, under Peter the Great, the Patriarchate was abolished and the supreme authority in the Church was vested in a body called the Holy Governing Synod,

formed on the Lutheran model. This was no synod as synods are understood in the West, but a committee whose members were appointed and dismissed at the will of the Tsar. The bishops were dragooned into acceptance of this system, completely foreign as it was to the spirit of the Russian Church.

The vitality of the Russian Church in the period after Peter the Great, and especially in the nineteenth century, found expression in widespread missionary activity. The expansion of the Church coincided with the expansion of the Empire, and it is difficult for the Western Christian to decide which was the dominating motive. If the State was benevolently interested in the Church, it was also determined to control it. In the summer of 1917 the All-Russian Church Council met in Moscow, swept away Peter's Holy Governing Synod and restored the Patriarchate. Tikhon, Metropolitan of Moscow, was appointed to occupy the Patriarchal Throne. After the establishment of the Soviet Government there was an attempt to suppress religion—"the opium of the people." The activities of the Church were curtailed, the Cathedral of St. Isaac in Moscow was turned into an anti-God museum, blasphemous processions were organised at the time of the Christian Festivals and all the power of modern propaganda was brought into action against the Church. Teachers and Government officials, if they were known to be practising Christians, were in grave danger of dismissal. But Christ was still securely enthroned in the hearts of many Russian peasants and the State was only too glad to enlist the help of the Church in the struggle against Germany.

It is reported that an anti-religious agitator, while haranguing a Russian crowd, called upon God, if He existed, to strike him dead. Nothing happened, and he inferred that there was no God because He had not killed him. "No", said the crowd, "He hasn't, but we will." And they did. This is an illustration of the striking dualism which runs through the Russian character. The spirituality of the Russian is well seen in Zossima, as portrayed by Dostoyevsky in "The Brothers Karamazov", and he would be a bold man who would estimate in how many houses Christian symbols are to be found. There are still barriers to surmount, but now that contacts with the Churches of the West have been resumed, we can have some hope of better things.

The Great Schism

"I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, the Giver of Life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son..." In these words the Churches of the West profess their faith in the Holy Spirit of God. The Orthodox Churches say only "Who proceedeth from

the Father", and resent the addition of the "filioque" clause, "and the Son." They allow that the phrase "proceeding from the Father through the Son" might be permissible as an opinion, based on the words in the Gospel, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter" (John 14.16). But they will not tolerate a form of words which might suggest the possibility that two Sources or Originating Principles exist within the Godhead. Cyril Lucar, the "Protestant Patriarch", published his "Confession" in 1629 and is alleged to have said that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father through the Son, but the Synod of Jerusalem in 1672 was doubtful whether Cyril had written the "Confession". At the same time the Synod was very careful to safeguard Orthodox doctrine.

Orthodox doctrine was not the only point at issue in this dispute; ecclesiastico-political rivalry also played its part, and insults and accusations were hurled at Popes, Patriarchs and Emperors. Party strife is a permanent feature of Byzantine history and the people of the city took sides in all theological disputes. But, as very often happens, with the passage of time the political aspect of the dispute came more and more into the foreground. The man who reached the Patriarchal Throne had probably done so because of the frantic efforts of one party or the other, and this was so with Photius who was hurried through a whole series of ordinations in a single week and was enthroned in 858. Opinions about Photius have varied in an extraordinary way, ranging from fulsome praise to abuse. The traditional view of the West was to regard him as obsessed by a passion for power and the real author of the schism between East and West. But this opinion is not unanimous, and even in the West there are scholars who praise him as a great Churchman and a genuine Christian. At any rate in the hurly-burly of controversy Photius became a name to conjure with, and his writings were regarded as the classical statement of the Eastern case against Rome. In what he wrote there are more than thirty arguments against the use of the "filioque" clause. The addition of the words "and the Son" found favour in the West; it was a powerful weapon with which to combat Arianism, but was not introduced into the Creed at Rome until 1014. The East continues to regard this as unauthorized and something done without the consent of the whole Church. On July 16, 1054, the Papal legates came with a bull of excommunication against the then Patriarch and his adherents which they deposited on the altar of St. Sophia in Constantinople.

The situation deteriorated when in 1204 an army of the Crusaders sacked Constantinople and were guilty of barbarity and sacrilege. We can hardly wonder that well-meaning attempts to re-

unite the Churches came to nothing. The Eastern Christians went so far as to say that they would sooner have Mohammed's turban in the Church of the Holy Wisdom than the Pope's tiara. The most famous of the "Reunion Councils" was held at Florence in 1439. By then things were desperate. The Turkish armies were half-way across Asia Minor. The Orthodox Church was represented at the Council of Florence by envoys officially appointed by the Patriarchates. There were long and stormy debates, but if Constantinople was to be saved from the Turks, help must come from the West. The Pope's price was always the same—acceptance, among other things, of the words "and the Son." The Eastern delegates, with one exception, gave way, but on their return Church and people alike condemned them and their action was repudiated. "Down with the unlawful interpolations!" shouted the Byzantine crowd, and then the monks led them in a rhythmic chant of "Not the Son, not the Son!" Calm and sedate theological discussion might well have settled the dispute, but the intrusion of ecclesiastical politics has left it unsolved even today.

The Orthodox Church under the Turk.

The armies of Islam had already swept over the Balkan peninsula, but Constantinople held out for some years. Then Mohammed, the conqueror, rode to the Church of the Holy Wisdom. He dismounted and entered. He stopped the pillage that had already begun and caused a passage from the Koran to be read from the pulpit. We of the West must confess, to our shame, that the conduct of Mohammed was more clement and merciful than that of the Crusaders who sacked Constantinople in 1204. The history of the Orthodox Church under the Turkish regime is a story that excites both admiration and pity. The Turkish point of view must be understood; for them, as Moslems, there was no distinction between nationality and religion, secular and religious politics were one and the same thing. The Christians were recognised as People of the Book with a written record of revelation, but the Moslem Turk considered that Mohammed had superseded both Moses and Christ. For the Christians there were humiliating and irritating regulations which, in the early years, must have been a sore trial for those who had been nurtured in Constantinople under a Christian Emperor. There were to be no crosses on their churches and no bells were to be rung.

Psychologically the effect on the Church was less disastrous than one might expect. There are obvious parallels with the situation in modern Russia; it has been well said that religion is like

a nail. The harder you hit it, the deeper it goes in. The subtler policy of leaving social pressure to do its work is the wiser course for the imperialist who desires religion to vanish. For purposes of administration the Orthodox Church was the "Rum Millet" with the Oecumencial Patriarch as its recognised head. The Patriarch had formerly claimed ecclesiastical precedence; to that was now added civil jurisdiction. It is strange that under the Turks there was a distinct advance in the spiritual authority of the Patriarchate. At the same time the Patriarch was removed at the Sultan's will, and the fear of loss of prestige, combined with the hope of rich emoluments, inevitably gave rise to intrigue. Dr. Kidd summarises the record of the period when he says, "out of 159 Patriarchs who have held office between the fifteenth and twentieth centuries, the Turks have, on 105 occasions, driven Patriarchs from their throne; there have been twenty-seven abdications, often involuntary; six Patriarchs have suffered violent deaths by hanging, poisoning or drowning; and only twenty-one have died natural deaths while in office." To this Fortescue adds another comment—"During the seventy-five years from 1625 to 1700, there were fifty Patriarchs—an average of eighteen months each."

During this period there was also discontent inside the Church. It was true that the level of education and culture was higher among the Greek clergy than elsewhere, and for that reason the policy of appointing Greek Bishops in the Churches was to some extent justified. But the policy was very unpopular and aroused much resentment. But the greatest tragedy for the Orthodox Church lay in the fact that under Turkish rule they were to some extent isolated from the rest of Christendom at a time when new ideas were coming to birth in the minds of men. The Orthodox Church, in consequence, had no part in making, or opposing, the Reformation, and indeed it was only in the nineteenth century that the rank and file of the Church made any lasting contacts with the Reformed Churches of the West.

Two other comments must be added at this juncture. To the Orthodox in bondage under Moslem rule Russia appeared as a far off land of promise, a place of rest and peace where Orthodoxy was free and honoured. The Russia of the Tsars was always regarded in the Near East as the protector of the Orthodox Church. The representatives of the U.S.S.R., godless in their own country, are ready enough to court the Orthodox leaders in the Near East and generous with their invitations to visit Russia. The response of the Orthodox is by no means unanimous, and one writer has wisely commented, "Why run from the rain to take refuge under the waterspout?" The second comment is also necessary to those in the

West who attempt to assess the situation in the Near East. Events of a hundred years ago are by no means bygones; they are living memories in the minds of men and are of great emotional and religious significance. The situation in Cyprus is a case in point. The activities of the Greek Cypriots are to one side terrorism and to the other side a war of liberation. It is necessary to remember that at the time of the Greek war of independence, more than a hundred years ago, the Turks accused the Archbishop Cyprianos of complicity. He and three other bishops were saddled like horses in front of the Governor's palace; bits were forced into their mouths, breaking their teeth, and they were then driven along with spurs to the place of execution and hanged. These things are not easily forgotten in the Near East, where, as a result of sad experience in the past, politics are never entirely divorced from religion.

The Worship of the Orthodox Church.

By Western standards the Services of the Orthodox Church are long, and with this opinion even some of the Orthodox seem to have been in agreement. In 1656 an Archdeacon of Aleppo visited Moscow for Holy Week and Easter, and he pathetically prayed, "God, grant us Thy special aid to get through the whole of this present week. As for the Muscovites, their feet must surely be of iron." Western Christians are sometimes rather surprised by the freedom and spontaneity of action of the worshippers. Men, women and children are gathered in the nave of the Church, occupying any position they fancy. They move from one place to another if they feel so disposed; they go up to salute an icon or place before an icon a lighted candle. Normally the attitude of the Orthodox worshipper is to stand, and they take less part in the Service, at any rate audibly, than in the Churches of the West. They join in the Lord's Prayer and the Creed. The choir with their choirmaster also stand, usually out of sight of the main part of the congregation, and as no instrumental music is permitted, the singing is unaccompanied.

The Westerner is accustomed to going into his Church and having an unobstructed view of the Altar or Holy Table. To him the most unusual feature of an Orthodox Church is the great screen, the iconostas, which runs across the full width of the Church and hides the altar from view. The iconostas is so called because it is decorated with icons, and, as a matter of fact, in the Orthodox East the word "altar" designates, not a thing, but a place — that part of the Church in which the altar stands. The Eastern name for the altar is the throne, and they can therefore say that the throne stands within the altar. In the iconostas there are three

doors, double doors in the middle and single doors at each side. To the Orthodox this screen is a symbol of heaven and earth, and when the double doors in the middle are opened that is a symbol of the imperfect worship of earth being linked with the perfect worship of heaven; it is much the same symbolism as in the West when we say, "With Angels and Archangels, and all the company of heaven..."

The Service which other Churches call the Lord's Supper or the Holy Communion or the Mass is called the Liturgy; there are several forms of the Liturgy, but the Liturgy of St. Chrysostom is the norm and most frequently used. The Western visitor is at first rather confused because it seems to him that two Services are going on at one and the same time—behind the doors in the "altar," and in front of them. The deacon acts as a liaison officer, as it were, for the congregation. There are some interesting survivals from the past; immediately before the recitation of the Creed the deacon cries, "The Doors, the Doors," meaning that they must be guarded. The Epistle and Gospel are read as in the Churches of the West where everything seems to lead up to the Prayer of Consecration. There is, of course, a Prayer of Consecration in the East, but the actions are not visible to the congregation as the doors which lead into the sanctuary are then closed. The Great Entrance is the most conspicuous and spectacular part of Orthodox Liturgy; it corresponds to what we in the West call the Offertory, the bringing of bread and wine to be offered on the altar. In the West the Offertory requires the minimum of action, the priest only moving across to a small table at the side of the sanctuary and taking the bread and wine from it to the altar. But with the Orthodox there is a solemn procession in which the clergy and their attendants pass out through the northern door of the screen, move along the front of it in full view of the congregation, and after a pause pass in again through the Royal Doors in the centre, the choir meanwhile singing an appropriate hymn.

After the Consecration the clergy make their communion in both kinds, separately, as in the West. The priest and deacon then come out through the Royal Doors, the priest holding the chalice in which the consecrated breads have been put. Layfolk then approach, and as they stand the communion is administered to them by means of a spoon placed between the communicant's lips. The communicant then wipes his lips on a silk napkin which hangs over the deacon's arm.

In the West the word "hymn" usually implies a composition in metre and rhyme. The hymns of the Orthodox are rhythmical and in poetic language — hymns, in fact, in the sense that we call

the Gloria in Excelsis, "Glory be to God on high," a hymn. Many of these have been translated and are found in the hymnaries of the West; "Hail, gladdening Light" is perhaps the best known, but "The day is past and over," "Fierce raged the tempest" and "The Day of Resurrection" are other examples of the many hymns that we owe, through translation, to the East.

The Westerner who wishes to understand more fully the beauty and symbolism of Orthodox worship must attend their Services, preferably in the company of a devout Orthodox friend who can make some explanations. He will soon be forced to the conclusion that "there are differences of administration, but the same Lord." *The Icons.*

The icons are such a striking feature of any Orthodox Church that they deserve a word of comment. First, the Orthodox do not worship icons, they venerate them. Dr. Visser 't Hooft, the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, has well remarked, "As singing beautifies worship in the Church, so there is no objection to beautifying the walls with pictures." The function of the icons is to instruct and to stimulate devotion. The position of the icons on the iconostas or screen is not a random arrangement. There is a generally accepted scheme though it may vary in different countries. Thus on the Royal Doors you will see, as a general rule, the four Evangelists, the Annunciation and the Last Supper. Flanking the Royal doors the worshipper sees, on one side, the icon of Our Lord and next to that the Patron Saint of the Church; on the other side of the Royal Doors is an icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Above are other tiers of icons, one tier often illustrating the Twelve Great Festivals of the Orthodox Church. The icon of the prophet Elijah is found in the neighbourhood of the font. Thus those unable to read could, by using their eyes, learn something of the history of their Church.

The production of icons is still, to some extent, the pious activity of monks, and the men who make the icons are attempting to do two things — to decorate a flat surface for the honour of the Church and to convey in line and colour some aspect of the divine truth. Local custom very often can be noticed in an icon. In Cyprus, for instance, Our Lord is often depicted wearing the single jewelled ear-ring that is worn by the only son of a Cypriot family. It is difficult for the Westerner to understand the veneration with which the Orthodox regard their icons; he is perhaps mystified by the number of them in a large Church. The first thing that the Orthodox worshipper does on entering a Church is to salute such of the icons as may claim his particular attention, and well-to-do

people accumulate their icons and hand them down from father to son.

The Orthodox Church Today.

Despite the trials and persecutions of history Orthodoxy has survived with her faith intact. She may have had time-servers in high places from time to time, but what Church has not? The two-fold cry of the Orthodox — "Lord, have mercy" and "Glory be to Thee, O Lord" — has rung out through the centuries and still rings out today. There is a new Diaspora; in the United States of America the Orthodox Bishops in a letter to President Roosevelt claimed to represent 6,000,000 people. There is an Orthodox Archbishop with a diocese in Australia, there is an Orthodox Archbishop with a diocese in South Africa, and these are only three examples out of many that could be given. The parallel with the Anglican Communion is noteworthy; a number of independent, self-governing Churches, each managing her own affairs, but finding their centre of unity—in one case in Canterbury, in the other case in Constantinople.

The Orthodox are, of course, conservative in their opinions, but it is not a conservatism that is rigid, not a mummy swathed in the bands of tradition. They claim to hold unaltered and unimpaired the doctrine handed down by the Apostles. The title of the Orthodox Church would be meaningless if they were unable to claim that their opinions were orthodox! The Slav members of the same Church have another title which is equally important; they call their Church "Pravoslavny" — the "right-praising" or "right-worshipping" Church.

Long before the World Council of Churches came into being the principle of Orthodox collaboration in the Oecumenical Movement was voiced by the Patriarch Joachim III in an Encyclical which was issued in the year 1902. "Our primary task is to watch over our own doctrines, but we must nevertheless be concerned for our Christian brothers and never cease our prayers for the union of all into ONE. Difficulties should not discourage us, nor should the thought of the apparent impossibility of it stop us from engaging ourselves in the work of Church unity which is dear to God or from examining existing possibilities for it..." Metropolitan James of Melita tells us that what the Orthodox mean by "unity" is not unity in the strict sense of the word, but rather "union" or "reunion". They share with other Churches the hope for a gradual narrowing of the gap between Churches with very different traditions and for an increased emphasis on the things that unite rather

than on the things that separate. They are not blind to present Church realities, and they will not be satisfied with reunion on a minimum basis nor with a seeming unity that is maintained by authority. In this last connexion the idea of primacy in the East has always differed radically from the idea of primacy in the West.

When Russian envoys were sent out in various directions to investigate various forms of Christianity, those sent to Constantinople reported on the worship seen in the Church of the Holy Wisdom, "We felt we were in heaven rather than on earth." The contribution which the Orthodox worshipper can make to the Christian world of today cannot be denied. He is conscious of his religion primarily because the unseen world is very real to him and he knows that this world can be permeated by the other. He salutes an icon with reverence, but he is not only looking at it, but through it; for him the icon is a window opening upon the spiritual world. Dr. Bell, once Bishop of Chichester, has said, "Orthodoxy gives to the Oecumenical Movement something unique; its value in this connexion cannot be exaggerated." And there is, in addition, the considered opinion of Dr. Visser 't Hooft, "The Eastern Churches have maintained a sense of the objective reality and the cosmic dimensions of the drama of salvation which the Western Churches need to recapture." Let us end with the same words as those with which we began. A Church so large and with so glorious a history in the defence of the true faith cannot be ignored.

A MOTHER'S DAUGHTER BECOMES HER SISTER

"I shall never forget that ovation as long as I live." The speaker voiced the verdict of every one of the nearly 400 persons who witnessed what turned out to be the climax of the impressive ceremony which marked the coming-of-age of the Evangelical Church of Egypt.

On the previous day, Thursday, March 13, in one of the courts of the American Mission School for Girls, in Ezbekia, Cairo, the Mission had given a tea in honor of the Synod of the Nile, in session in its first formal meeting since becoming completely independent of the United Presbyterian Church of North America.

This week's story had its beginnings more than a century ago, with the arrival of the first American Protestant missionaries in Egypt. Names like Barnett, McCague, Hogg, Lansing, Ewing, Harvey, Watson, and Alexander fill the pages on which are recorded the history of the United Presbyterian outreach in Egypt. Concentrating on the basic task of Bible teaching in the language of the country—Arabic—amidst a people whose spiritual heritage had

been largely lost through the slow death of their own mother-tongue, Coptic (a mixture of ancient Egyptian and Greek), those early pioneers won a response from rank and file Egyptian Christians which soon led to the formation of a new church.

It was not the missionaries' intention to establish a new church. They earnestly hoped to be of help in restoring to the established Coptic Orthodox Church something of the basic Christian message, the vigor of witness, and the vision largely lost through centuries of persecution and the gradual displacement of its ancient language by that of Egypt's conquerors, the Arabs. Yet suspicion and distrust, long deeply ingrained in a Christian remnant, still clinging to the *form* of its heritage, blocked the way to missionary help within the framework of the established Church. Hence, at popular insistence, a new Church was born. But it did not occur overnight!

It was nearly five years after the arrival of the first Americans that the first four local members were received into communion with the tiny group of missionaries. The following years, 1860, witnessed the constitution of the first Presbytery, by action of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church of North America, under whose auspices the missionaries had been sent out. Two years later, in 1862, the first congregation was organized at Ezbekia, Cairo, in the American Mission premises. And although its pastor and members were mostly Americans, its formation marked the actual birth of the Evangelical Church of Egypt — the daughter of the United Presbyterian Church of North America.

1864 marked the opening of the first class of the Theological Seminary, followed, a few months later, by the opening — in a stable — of Assiut College, which was destined, in the providence of God, to become a leading factor in the creation of a Protestant community, sending out across the years thousands of young men bearing on their characters the distinctive imprint of an education received in a strongly Christian environment. Many of them became supporters and members of the Protestant community, teachers in Mission and Church schools, pastors of Evangelical congregations, and elders according to the Presbyterian system which was adopted.

The ordination and installation of the first Egyptian Evangelical pastor in an Evangelical congregation took place in 1871. A rapid period of growth took place which culminated in the constitution, in 1899, of the Synod of the Nile of the United Presbyterian Church of North America. Expansion and growth continued apace with the turn of the century, with new churches springing up all the length of Egypt's Nile Valley and spreading into Northern

Sudan. The original Presbytery was subsequently divided and subdivided until today, with seven Presbyteries in Egypt and one in North Sudan, the Evangelical Church comprises nearly 30,000 members, plus at least another 30,000 children and adult adherents, in more than 200 congregations and meeting places, with some 175 pastors and lay evangelists.

Across the centuries following the penetration of Islam, the various pressures — religious, political and economic — resulted not only in the defection of the vast majority of the Christian populace to the religion of their conquerors, but also the concentration of the remnant in Upper (that is, Southern) Egypt. Thus the bulk of the leadership in Egypt's present-day Evangelical Community comes from the southern provinces, and generally from the smaller towns and villages. There the strength of the new Church still lies. But it is by no means confined to those areas. Cairo, being the country's capital, has been the scene of rapid growth also. American missionaries, nearly all of whom are United Presbyterians, delight in startling visitors by stating that Cairo is the third largest United Presbyterian city in the world — outstripped only by such strongholds as Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. For Cairo today boasts 20 organized U.P. congregations, with the beginnings of two or three more on the way.

Church expansion and growth has naturally brought greater and greater responsibility to rest on the Egyptians themselves. With responsibility came administrative and — to all intents and purposes — economic independence. And while the Synod of the Nile continued to be one of the Synods of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church of North America, its affairs gradually came under the complete control of its own Egyptian leaders. American missionaries confined their activities chiefly to administration of the Mission's larger institutions, to launching new projects, and to committee work under the appointment of Mission, Synod and its presbyteries. Financial assistance from the Mother Church, insofar as it exceeded American salaries and subsidies to the larger institutions, was earmarked for specific Synodical programs: assistance to the Theological Seminary; to the Egypt and Sudan Sunday School Union; to the Literature and Literacy effort; to the development of new evangelistic centers; to Youth work; to Women's work; and to the support of Synod's full-time evangelist.

Then came the nation's long-sought political independence, the revolution which changed the land from a monarchy to a republic, and the current wave of intense nationalism. To many it seemed that the time was ripe for a change in the status of the Evangelical

Church. No longer was it in harmony with the times to have it appear as though that Church, independent though she was in actual life and practice, should in reality be an integral part of an established American denomination. But the very suggestion that the tie be broken was abhorrent to Egyptian United Presbyterians. Their reply was: "No matter what you say, we are looked upon as Americans. And no matter what you do — though you should transport us bodily to the middle of the Libyan desert — we shall continue to be considered Americans."

Yet they came to realize, gradually and reluctantly, that for their own good the tie should be severed. But it has helped alleviate their grief to know that their coming-of-age does not mean a withdrawal of their American colleagues, but rather the beginning of a new relationship in which the daughter church takes her place beside the church that gave her birth, and henceforth calls her, not "Mother", but "Sister".

The Egyptian Evangelical Church therefore petitioned the U.P. General Assembly in 1957 for permission to become completely independent. The petition was granted. And last week's opening of the annual meeting of the Synod of the Nile, marked its first assembly since achieving independence. It was obviously a historic occasion: a time for reflection and recognition; a time both for the backward look and — supremely — the forward look.

For the occasion a top-drawer group of representatives were sent out from America. Dr. Robert N. Montgomery, President of Muskingum College and Moderator of the U.P. General Assembly, accompanied by Mrs. Montgomery and their daughter, Molly, were sent to Egypt (as well as to the other U.P. Mission fields) by the U.P. Board of Foreign Missions. The Women's General Missionary Society sent Mrs. Russell K. Montgomery as its representative. The Women's Organization of the Presbyterian U.S.A. Church sent Mrs. Walter Clyde. And Dr. Park Johnson, Field Representative of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, was sent from his headquarters in Beirut to represent both that Board and the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church. Dr. Glenn P. Reed, Field Secretary of the U.P. Board of Foreign Missions, and Mrs. Reed were also in the country for the occasion.

Synod meetings opened formally on Wednesday, March 12, in the historic Ezbekia Church, Cairo where the first Evangelical congregation was organized 96 years ago. That Church is currently housed in the central Mission building, now hoary with tradition and age (80 years). There, following roll-call, the distinguished

visitors were briefly introduced. And there the Moderator for 1958 was elected — the first man in living memory to be elected a second time to the Church's highest office. Several years ago, at the end of his first term as Moderator, he resisted a determined effort on the part of some to re-elect him, believing this would not be in the interests of a democratic system. This time, when the voting was about to begin, he withdrew from the auditorium. When called back in it was to learn that his brethren had done him the unprecedented honor of electing him their leader for a second time. It was a well-deserved honor. Rev. Labib Mishriky is universally loved and respected, not only as a successful preacher and pastor, but also as a master churchman, skilled at resolving disputes, versed in the details of every major problem, a man whose lively wit and breadth of understanding evoke good-will and confidence, and one whose manner of speech never gives nor recognizes offense. As one veteran missionary put it: "It's no wonder they elected him for a second term, he *is* the Synod."

After two days of hard work at their roster of business, the Synod adjourned to accept an invitation to a tea reception offered in their honor by the Mission. This was the first of two gala events which marked the final evolving of Synod into a national, independent organization.

The tea reception, on the afternoon of Thursday, March 13, was held in the former Boys' School court of the Mission's Ezbekia Building. The Girls' School, which this year spilled over into the former Boys' School area, cooperated by adjourning its sessions for that day so that preparations could be made. In the spacious court area an appropriate atmosphere was created by the erection of colorful oriental tent-work around the four walls and covering over the top of the second floor level. Long tables adorned with candesticks, flowers, and endless trays of cakes and cookies became the center of chief interest. When the doors swung open at four o'clock, the huge crowd that was Synod filed past a receiving line made up of the distinguished visitors interspersed with missionaries who introduced the guests as they came through.

The first hour sped quickly by and then, tea over except for a few, all passed through an opening in the tent-work into the adjoining chapel for an informal program presided over by the Rev. Bradley Watkins, president of the Mission. Explaining that the Mission had seized on this opportunity to extend its congratulations to the new Church, Mr. Watkins introduced the three missionaries who had been asked to serve as spokesmen. First rose Dr. Ralph

McLaughlin to lace his congratulations with recollections reaching back across the forty years of his missionary service, due to terminate this Spring. He mentioned some of the many changes he and Mrs. McLaughlin have witnessed in Egypt. Following him, Dr. Davida Finney, herself a daughter of the Mission and now coming to the close of 44 years of missionary service, rose to tell, beautifully and effectively, of a fact of which none must ever lose sight in the present or in the years ahead: that our essential oneness is in and through Christ our Lord, and that as long as He is among us, unifying by His love, strengthening by His presence, and enabling by His grace, no combination of forces or circumstances can prevent our living and witnessing effectively for Him. Concluding the Mission's moment, came Dr. Walter Skellie, president of Assiut College, and the Mission's leading Arabic scholar. In faultless Arabic he gave due significance to the occasion in the perspective of the world-wide growth of the Christian Church, not merely in size, but in the comprehension of its task as a task requiring a mature response to the challenge of the day: the challenge to all Christians to move forward together, hand in hand, across the unreached areas of our world.

As Synod's Moderator called them forward, several native churchmen spoke in grateful response. There was Ruling Elder Hakim Saleeb and his pastor, Rev. Tewfik Gayyed, of the Fagalah (Cairo) Church — perhaps the strongest in the denomination. There was Rev. Tewfik Saleh, resident professor of the Evangelical Theological Seminary, and there was the Moderator himself. The program ended with the Rev. Watkins reading the Mission's official word of greeting and good-will to the Church.

The next day, Friday, found Synod in session at the Shubra al-Nuzha Church, one of four Evangelical congregations located in the densely-populated northern section of the city. Its able and aggressive pastor, Rev. Iskander Abiskhairoun, returned only last August from a year's work in the States where he studied various aspects of church administration to prepare himself for a more effective service as Synod's new Treasurer and as one of the architects of its new Board of Administration.

During the past four years his congregation has been hard at work erecting and paying for its new and beautiful church home, still in process of completion. With its bright and spacious interior, its dual pulpit type chancel (the first of its kind in Egypt), and the beautiful and symbolic designs on walls and ceiling, the church, as the newest completely Egyptian achievement formed a fitting setting for the day's events. Its state of incompleteness was a

mute reminder of the unfinished evangelistic task, both in Egypt and in the world, which calls for ever fuller commitment and renewed devotion.

The 11 o'clock "order of the day" brought to the platform Synod's guests for the day, their out-of-country American visitors. With them on the platform, besides the Moderator of Synod, was Mrs. Ibrahim Said, president of the Women's Union of the Evangelical Church, and wife of one of the Church's most distinguished pastors and churchmen, Dr. Ibrahim Said.

First to speak, among the guests, was Dr. Park Johnson, who led Synod in a timely devotional treatment of Peter's deliverance from prison. Laying due stress on the pivotal factors in Peter's deliverance, i.e., the existence of a steadfast group of friends who persisted in their prayer for him, plus the fact Peter himself, though beset by chains, armed guards, and locked prison gates, obeyed the order to rise up and go forth, Dr. Johnson made clear to all the essentials of progress and achievement in any Christian life, individual or corporate: the essentials of prayer and obedience to the heavenly voice.

At the close of devotions, and following the Moderator's formal introduction of all the guests, Dr. Johnson again came forward, this time to present the official greetings of the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church and its Board of Foreign Missions, the documents in his hands being turned over to Rev. Naseef Tanious, Clerk of Synod, and pastor of the Sohag Church in the far south of Egypt.

Next were the two lady guests. In voicing her greetings, Mrs. Walter Clyde — whose husband is a professor at Western Theological Seminary, but this year is spending his sabbatical teaching at the Near East School of Theology, Beirut — also presented, on behalf of the Woman's Organization of the Presbyterian Church, a lovely Bible to the Women of the sister Church in Egypt. The gift was gratefully acknowledged by Mr. Ibrahim Said.

Mrs. Russell Montgomery gave a graphic review of the program and achievements of the United Presbyterian women in the States, offering thereby a wide range of suggestion to guide and stimulate the still-young and inexperienced Women's Union. She concluded her speech by presenting a gavel to her Egyptian sisters — a gavel made from the wood from the "Ibis", famous Nile houseboat, whose romance-wreathed history has caught and held the imagination and support of thousands of State-side U.P.'s whose gifts across many decades have kept the white-sailed "bird" busy at its Gospel-bearing task.

Dr. Montgomery rose last, providing a fitting peak to the crescendo of audience interest and anticipation. In his own brief address, as Moderator, he pledged continued fellowship in the ongoing mission of the Church, but in the context of a new status — that of a sister-to-sister or brother-to-brother relationship in Christ, Who is the Lord of all. As he spoke, he called attention to the fact that he was “wearing several hats”, or functioning in more than one capacity. In his capacity as Moderator, he presented to the Egyptian Evangelical Church the assurances of Christian co-operation and good-will for the years ahead on the part of the Church in America. This expression, beautifully inscribed on a large, frame-worthy scroll, was handed over, amid flashing photobulbs, to Synod’s Moderator. This act, more than any other, symbolized the fact of independence, the outward deed marking the actual emergence of the younger Church into a status and an identity uniquely its own.

Wearing “another hat”, Dr. Montgomery brought official greetings from the Alliance of the Reformed Churches Throughout the World Holding the Presbyterian Order, together with a cordial assurance from that body to the new Church that its application for membership would be very welcome.

Dr. Montgomery also spoke of the coming celebrations in Pittsburgh on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the birth of the United Presbyterian Church, to be followed by the first General Assembly of the new United Presbyterian Church which will come into existence as the 100-year old body merges with the older one to form the new U.P. Church. On behalf of the Church in America he issued a warm invitation to Synod’s Moderator to attend these historic celebrations as a guest.

The significance of all they had seen and heard was no doubt grasped by many of the Synodical elders and pastors present. Unquestionably their leaders fully appreciated the import of it all. But there were naturally those who, by reason of their remoteness from major centers and currents of activity and communication, must have been somewhat bewildered by what was taking place. Hazy comprehension would, they knew, give way to greater clarity as time went on, and as their leaders guided them both in the reordering of their own house and in the establishment of fruitful relationships with various other sister organizations. They clapped, therefore, with apparent understanding and appreciation, at all the proper places on the program. But no observer could help wondering how much of what they were witnessing was deeply moving to them. Might they in some sense be compared to the Disciples of

our Lord who, although they were first-hand witnesses, came into a full comprehension of what they had witnessed only in the perspective created by their remoteness in time from the actual events themselves?

Whatever the answer, there was no mistaking or doubting their appreciation of what happened when all the above had transpired.

Dr. Montgomery, coming to the close of his historic presentation, announced another "change of hats", and asked that he be considered now as President of Muskingum College. In that capacity he had been authorized to confer an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree. The atmosphere became electric. This was indeed something they understood! No institution in Egypt confers such degrees. Up to about four years ago there were no D.D.'s at all among the Church's clergy. Then Sterling College blazed the trail by bestowing one on Rev. Ibrahim Said, during his brief visit to the States in 1954. The summer of the following year, on his visit to the fields, Dr. Robert Gibson, president of Monmouth College, brought a D.D. degree for Rev. Tewfik Saleh. And nearly a year later Dr. Will W. Orr, Westminster College president, conferred the same on his long-time friend, Dr. Butros abdel-Malik, the first Evangelical clergyman to earn a Ph.D. degree — and that from Princeton in 1935.

Thus in recent years there had been a growing awareness of the source and significance of honorary degrees for outstanding clergymen... men whose Christian example and selfless service had been an inspiration to others and a factor in building up the Church of Jesus Christ.

From a psychological standpoint, too, there had been preparation for what was to come. For one thing, only a tiny minority of those present had ever before witnessed the awarding of a D.D. degree. Most had been out of Cairo when Dr. Tewfik Saleh was awarded his. The other two holding the degree had been in America at the time of the award. There was, then, this native curiosity to raise the pitch of expectation.

But deeper still was the oft-overlooked nature of a people long-accustomed to being ignored, discriminated against, and looked-down upon by their fellow-countrymen of the other faith. Human nature wherever it may be found responds to appreciation and recognition. And where such is eminently deserved — by human standards — the popular response is likely always to be a tangible demonstration of approval.

Precisely this took place when Dr. Montgomery asked Rev. Bradley Watkins to escort the Rev. Ghabrial Rizqallah to the

chancel. Held in high esteem and deep affection by the Church at large, Rev. Rizqallah, his step only slightly faltering after 51 years in the ministry, is a "Father in Israel", a maker of preachers, "the grand old man".

As he took his place by the pulpit a wave of spontaneous and gigantic applause broke over the audience. When the citation had been read, the impressive words of the award spoken, and while the hood was being adjusted on the veteran churchman's shoulders, the ovation broke out thunderously once more and hardly an eye in that church was dry as an assembly of Egyptian Evangelical Christians gave expression to their feelings over the honor that had come to one of their own leaders who had served his Lord and theirs so long, so faithfully, and so well. It was this sight which caused one observer to remark: "I shall never forget that ovation as long as I live."

It didn't matter that Dr. Ghabrial Rizqallah, when asked if he wished to say anything, could hardly speak. It didn't matter that when he did so, all he could say was: "They took me by surprise! Why didn't somebody tell me?" It didn't matter that the main aisle filled with enthusiastic well-wishers and that order was restored only with some difficulty. A deserving leader had, at the sunset of his life, been accorded a significant recognition. And in that recognition all had felt recognized and signally honored.

The remaining items of the day's program were anti-climactic by comparison, though in themselves worthy of note. Dr. Montgomery announced that he was going to award a second D.D. degree, this one to Synod's new Moderator, Rev. Labib Mishriky, who was serving as his Church's first chief officer since its achievement of independence. Hearty applause greeted both this award and the response of the recipient.

To bring the momentous meeting to a close, the Moderator announced that all were invited to lunch, to be served, following adjournment, in the court adjoining the church, and presented in honor of Synod and the out-of-country guests by the Evangelical churches of Cairo. Then he recalled his senior colleague, Dr. Rizqallah, to the platform and assisted as the latter, in his vigorous, familiar manner, led the assembly in the singing of:

"The Great Redeemer's Church" (Psalm 87).

Willis A. McGill.

Cairo, Egypt
March 21, 1958

CORRESPONDENTS

- Evangelism Rev. William McE. Miller
American Mission,
Tabriz, Iran.
- Spiritual Life of the Church . . . Rev. Tanios Zakhary,
American Mission
Cairo, Egypt.
- Education Miss Irene Teagarden,
American Mission
Sidon, Lebanon.
- Medical Dr. Harry Boyes,
American Mission Hospital,
Tripoli, Lebanon.
- Youth Work Rev. Ayyad Zakhary,
American Mission
Cairo, Egypt.
- Missions and Governments . . . Rev. William Sage Woolworth, Jr.
P.O.Box 142
Istanbul, Turkey.
- Rural Work Rev. S. N. Alter,
American Hospital,
El Mina, Tripoli, Lebanon.
- Work for the Blind Miss S.M.C. Gaster,
C.M.S. Mission,
Avenue Abbasabad,
Isfahan, Iran.
- Radio-Audio-Visual Aids Rev. Harold A. Fisher,
P.O.Box 235,
Beirut, Lebanon.
- Home and Family Life Mrs. Matilda Greiss,
215, Ramses Street,
Cairo, Egypt.

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